

SENATE—Thursday, February 17, 2005

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI, a Senator from the State of Alaska.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, we are disappearing dust without You.

Draw near to us and enable us to find in Your presence our dignity and destiny. Give us the sovereign knowledge that we belong to You and have been created in Your image. Teach us to serve and love humanity.

Today, keep our Senators safe as they labor for You and country. Make their tomorrow bright through the unfolding of Your powerful providence. Guide them through the darkest night as they meditate on Your precepts. Show us the path to life and make us glad as we walk with You.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 17, 2005.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI, a Senator from the State of Alaska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Ms. MURKOWSKI assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Madam President, today the Senate will begin with a period of

morning business. Yesterday we debated the genetic nondiscrimination legislation and, as a reminder, we will vote on passage of that bill at 3 p.m. today.

Throughout today's session, we will also be working on clearing the high risk pooling bill, as well as the committee funding resolution. The chairman and ranking member have been working on a resolution related to Lebanon, and we may be able to clear that resolution for floor action.

Later today, I will have more to say on tomorrow's schedule and the schedule for when we return from the President's Day recess.

LEBANON'S FORMER PRIME MINISTER RAFIQ HARIRI

Mr. FRIST. Madam President, on leader time, I will make a very brief statement on the assassination of Rafiq Hariri.

On behalf of the Senate, I will spend these few moments to rise and condemn in the harshest terms the cowardly and despicable assassination of Lebanon's former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

Monday, as Rafiq Hariri's motorcade was traveling along Beirut's Corniche seafont, a car bomb loaded with 600 pounds of explosives detonated, killing the former Prime Minister and 13 others.

Our condolences go out to the Hariri family and the people of Lebanon. They have lost a great man, and they have lost a beloved leader.

Rafiq Hariri served as Prime Minister in the aftermath of a devastating civil war that wrecked the country for 15 years. Over his 10 years in office, Prime Minister Hariri helped to revitalize the Lebanese economy and rebuild its shattered infrastructure, including the re-birth of Beirut's historic downtown district. His murder is a direct attack on the aspirations of the Lebanese people, and an attack on civilization itself.

We demand an investigation, and we demand that the killers, and any backers of the killers, be brought to justice.

Further, we strongly urge that Syria withdraw its 14,000 troops and intelligence personnel in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 and the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act passed by this body in 2003.

We support the President's decision to recall our Ambassador from Syria and urge the President to restrict the mobility of Syrian diplomats in Washington, DC, and at the United Nations in New York City.

Furthermore, we urge the President to seek a United Nations Security Council resolution that establishes an independent investigation into the assassination of the Prime Minister.

Today, the Lebanese people mourn the murder of a great leader. They line the streets—Christian, Druze, and Sunni—in an extraordinary show of unity.

Our message to them is clear: "The United States Senate stands with you. Your voices will be heard."

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business until 12 noon, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee, and the second 30 minutes under the control of the majority leader or his designee, and the remaining time shall be divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. FRIST. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE BUDGET

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, as we begin to debate the budget sent to us by President Bush, there will be a lot of discussion in the Chamber about spending restraints, about being conservative, and so on. The budget sent to us by President Bush proposes the highest budget deficit in the history of our country. I will be going to a hearing later this morning on the proposal to spend \$82 billion more on Iraq and Afghanistan. That is not in the budget. It is an emergency request.

The President's proposed budget, with a deficit well over \$400 billion in history, is short by somewhere around \$80 billion that will be spent on an emergency in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it also uses the Social Security